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Plain of Jars Operation With U.S. Aid Reported

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Special to The Star

VIENTIANE — The United States has launched a new secret operation against the Plain of Jars, a Communist - held area in northern Laos, well - informed sources say. "Commando raiders, some led by American military men in CIA employ have penetrated as far as Lima 22, an air strip in the east central plain.

U.S. aircraft are landing on the plain. An Air America C123 transport was stranded with its American crew on the plain for a night, according to well - informed sources. U.S. officials, however, refuse to discuss the operation making it difficult to assess the operation's exact magnitude or objectives.

One American source claimed Meo Gen. Vang Pao was "strengthening and improving his defensive position." Sources said Vang Pao took Ban Na, a key hill overlooking the plain last Tuesday. Unfortunately this claim of strengthening defenses does not jell with the U.S. presence on the plain or the excessive secrecy cloaking the operation on the part of U.S. and Lao officials.

Fraught With Danger

To clear North Vietnamese from the hills south of the plain and establish positions on hilltops overlooking the plain would be excellent, as it would give Vang Pao's forces a breather until the next dry season.

However, to go onto the plain is fraught with both military and political danger.

In 1969, a joint U.S. and Lao operation, About Face took the plain from the Communists briefly, but resulted in massive Hanoi retaliation which drove CIA-led Meos back farther than ever before and almost resuted in the secret base of Long Chen falling. A new offensive could mean that final end to feelers for talks between the government and Communists and lead to fresh Hanoi offensives. Hanoi has frequently made clear it will not tolerate a U.S. or government presence on the plain.

Jars and has sufficient force to push the corrupt, ill-managed Lao forces off plain again whenever it wants.

Some military sources have suggested that the Plain of Jars push is to relieve the pressure on the Meo base of Bouam Long, north of the plain.

When correspondents tried to find what the operation was about, Gen. Thongph Knoksy, the government spokesman, dodged into the corridors of Lao-headquarters. U.S. officials adamantly refuse to speak unless Thong Punh speaks first.

It is almost unbelievable that after Senate censure and publication of the Pentagon documents, a U.S. mission in Laos should once again resort to secrecy particularly concerning a U.S. run operation close to North Vietnam and China.

The operation previously resulted in tough Communist retaliation and caused considerable government and civilian loss in 1969. There can be no doubt the operation is considerable in size. The Pathet Lao radio which, although it is Communist, has been most truthful to date on Lao operations, says three regiments of Vang Pao's forces are involved. Vientiane military sources say two Thai battalions and six Lao Meo battalions are involved. U.S. air power is again extremely active over the plain, where some 5,000 civilians are still living. American embassy officials are trying to blame Vang Pao for the operation. "Vang Pao is very much his own man," three American officials said separately.

As all three used the same words, one can only assume somebody told them to say this. Vang Paos' forces are advised, paid, armed, clothed and sometimes led by CIA employees and it is impossible for the general to do anything big without American approval. Some middle-level Americans are already having second thoughts.

They fear that if Vang Pao finds no early Hanoi opposition he may continue to advance, bringing the U.S. into a new northern Laos debacle.

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retary had called upon the Governor of each State to send a list representing 150 percent of the approved number of delegates from each State. This list was to be sent to Washington, where HEW would make the final selection. This arrangement, I pointed out, could be regarded as an attempt to "stack the deck" politically in a conference where politics should not enter at all.

In addition, I asked Governors to reject the new HEW formula on the grounds that it is an affront to each Governor, that it usurps plans which have been months in the making, and that it would put the selection of delegates into the hands of Federal officials who are somehow deemed more qualified than State officials to choose the final list of State delegates.

Similar criticisms, I understand, were made by leaders of national organizations on aging and by directors of individual State agencies on aging.

Apparently, the protests have been heard, to judge by the following letter sent by the HEW Secretary on June 28 to all Governors:

On June 4, 1971, I sent you a letter outlining the nomination procedure for your State's delegation to the White House Conference on Aging to be held in Washington, D.C., November 28 to December 2, 1971.

Subsequent to that mailing some questions have arisen in several States regarding my request that the Governors nominate 150% of their State's quota. As was stated in my letter, I feel the 150% request is necessary to reduce the delay in the processing of your State's delegates in the event of duplicate nominations.

To clarify this situation, I am requesting that you submit a list of proposed delegates equal to the number of delegates assigned to the State and an additional list in the order of your preference, equal to 50% of your assigned number of delegates that we may turn to in the event such duplications occur.

Puzzled as I am by the view that a full 50 percent additional number of names is needed to prevent duplication, I nevertheless welcome the change in policy. It should help ward off the fears caused by the letter of June 4. It also indicates that the administration may be paying more attention than it has in the past to the sentiments of those who feel that the White House Conference on Aging—due to begin November 28—shall offer the broadest possible opportunity for full and free discussion of the very real issues which face 20 million older Americans of today and many millions more in the next decade. Their problems and their hopes for the future cannot be constricted or shaped into any special dogma or outlook. The people should be heard at this Conference, and they will insist on open proceedings, fairly arrived at.

CURRENT STATUS OF LAOS SECRET SESSION TRANSCRIPT

Mr. SYMINGTON. Mr. President, last June 30 I reported to the Senate the status of the transcript of the Senate's secret session on Laos which was held on June 7.

In that report I presented that the Committee on Foreign Relations had been informed on June 25 that a memo-

randum detailing the points of disagreement between the committee and the executive branch was being cleared within the executive branch prior to its presentation to the Secretary of State.

Yesterday, Mr. Joseph Wolf, the Secretary of State's designated representative for matters having to do with the Laos transcript, informed the committee staff that the memorandum in question had been cleared by the appropriate officials within the executive branch and was now awaiting action by the Secretary of State.

Let us hope that the executive branch will agree to final publication of this transcript at an early date. The people of this country are entitled to know far more about U.S. operations in Laos.

In the meanwhile, I have written to the Secretary of State in effort to secure additional background information regarding past and present U.S. financing of Thai troops in Laos. My request for this information was prompted by a public statement on U.S. financing of Thai troops made by the Department of State spokesman on the very afternoon of that Senate secret session.

This statement contained specific assertions as to the origins, the nature, and the legality of U.S. financing of Thai troops in Laos; and my letter asks the Department of State to provide the Senate with the facts regarding the actions in question, so that the Senate can examine those facts and draw its own conclusions before voting additional funds for Laos; also before deciding whether a ceiling, such as the one I have proposed, should be placed on U.S. expenditures in Laos.

I ask unanimous consent that my letter of June 29 to the Secretary be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the letter was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

JUNE 29, 1971.

HON. WILLIAM P. ROGERS,
The Secretary of State,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: On June 7 a State Department spokesman told the press that the United States support for Thai troops in Laos began as a program authorized by President Kennedy, that the troops are in Laos at the request of the Prime Minister of Laos and that United States financing of these troops is "fully consistent with all pertinent legislation." As Chairman of the Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad, I am interested in obtaining background information and documentation relevant to these assertions by the Department's spokesman.

In this connection we would appreciate your furnishing the Subcommittee with the following information.

(1) A description of the specific decisions taken by President Kennedy to authorize United States funding of Thai troops in Laos, and of the subsequent actions taken by United States diplomatic and military authorities to implement such decisions.

(2) An explanation of the funding procedure used to provide financial support for Thai troops pursuant to President's Kennedy's original authorization.

(3) A description of Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma's request for Thai troops, including answers to the following specific questions:

(a) When was the Prime Minister's request (or requests) made?

(b) In what form was the request made?
(c) To whom and to what government or governments was it addressed?
(d) What specifically did the Prime Minister request?

(e) What did the Prime Minister's request say with regard to arrangements for financial support and publicity concerning Thai troops?
(f) What response was given to the Prime Minister by the person, government or governments to whom the request was addressed?

(g) An explanation of how Souvanna's request relates to the various undertakings of the Royal Lao Government in the Geneva Agreements of 1962.

(h) A detailed explanation of any discussions, arrangements and agreements, formal or informal, involving the United States Government and the Royal Lao Government or the Government of Thailand relative to past or present United States financing and support for Thai troops in Laos.

(i) An identification of the departments or agencies which have provided funds for support of each of the various programs involving Thai troops in Laos.

Because the above request is relevant to the Senate's consideration of pending legislation having to do with United States expenditures in Laos, we would respectfully request that the information be provided at earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,

BRIAN SYMINGTON,
Chairman, Subcommittee on U.S. Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad.

THERE IS NO "FREE" CARE

MR. HANSEN. Mr. President, the American Medical News on June 28, in an article entitled "Nothing Is Free," pointed out that the American people should look beyond labels and examine content and cost of content in regard to national health insurance proposals.

The article makes the point that:

What everyone must realize is that no system provides "free" care for the public.

And that—

The public must pay for that care, whether the money comes out of the individual's pocket, is withheld from his paycheck for health insurance, is withheld from his paycheck for taxes, or is a part of the hidden costs of each product he buys.

Mr. President I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

NOTHING IS FREE

Organized labor and Sen. Edward Kennedy (D., Mass.) have teamed up to sponsor the National Health Security Act, which, they would have the public believe, would meet all the costs of illness suffered by taxpayers.

However, when the director of the AFL-CIO Dept. of Social Security, Bert Seidman, appeared recently on the radio program "Labor News Conference," the way the program would work was clarified.

Following are some excerpts:

Q. "Mr. Seidman, wouldn't your bill actually eliminate the existing health insurance industry?"

A. "I don't think it would eliminate the health insurance industry. Some parts of medical care are not covered by even the health security bill."

"The health security bill would cover a larger percentage of the costs of medical care than any other proposal that has been

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Blackwell, a mother of four children who graduated from the school after three years at the age of 29.

Mrs. Blackwell, who has completed her first year in the nursing school at the City College, said:

"I've got my foot in the door now and I'm going to keep on pushing." Her eventual aim is to become a doctor.

As teachers read off numerous awards, including those for scholastic excellence as well as perseverance—one student was found to have been riding a subway for a month because he had no place to stay—some of the students stood to give the clenched-fist black power salute.

"It was the toughest year we ever had," the school's headmaster, Edward F. Carpenter, told the class, which gave him a standing ovation.

But he encouraged the graduates to call the school for assistance if they needed money for emergencies.

"The money will be difficult to come by," he said, "but I want you to keep on calling on us."

SEQUENCE OF HISTORICAL EVENTS

Mr. McGEE. Mr. President, as the furor continues over the Pentagon papers and unreasoned recriminations continue to be leveled in connection with our involvement in Vietnam, I feel it would behoove all to restrain from making rash judgments based on inadequate data and inadequate research into this period of our Nation's history.

The Washington Post today published a column by Henry Owen devoted to this very point. In his column, entitled "A Deadline for Declassification?", Mr. Owen devotes his attention to the history of the public's view of the origins of each major conflict of this century. He states the public's view has been marked by three successive phases. The first phase is when the wartime official view is readily accepted. The second phase is when "a spate" of memoirs and other secret documents "persuaded people that it was largely the fault of their own wartime leaders." The third phase is when the professional historian "showed the truth to be a lot more complicated than any of these 'devil' theories would suggest."

Mr. Owen points out that we are presently in the second stage of this sequence of historical events. The final analysis, more than likely, will be completely different. It is more than likely that the final analysis will be completely different, if history holds true to form, than the verdict currently being rendered by many who have chosen to twist what little information they have to fit the confines of their own unreasoned view of Vietnam.

I have long advocated that history, and only history, can be the true judge of a nation's actions. That is why it is so very important that all of us leave the final judgment of Vietnam to the historians. It can serve no purpose to make that judgment at this time when highly speculative impressions are running rampant.

I ask unanimous consent that Henry Owen's column be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

OPEN FILES REVEAL THE COMPLICATED TRUTH: A DEADLINE FOR DECLASSIFICATION?

(By Henry Owen)

The current furor over secret Vietnam documents fits into a familiar pattern. The public's view of the origins of each major conflict (save Hitler's war) in the last century has been marked by three successive phases: Phase I, when the wartime official view was readily accepted; Phase II, when a spate of memoirs and other secret documents persuaded people that it was largely the fault of their own wartime leaders; and Phase III, in which professional historians showed the truth to be a lot more complicated than any of these "devil" theories would suggest. We are now in Phase II on Vietnam; the need for moving as soon as possible to Phase III can be better understood if we look to past experience.

CASE ONE: In 1914-18, the view that the Kaiser had single handedly brought on the war was universal outside Germany. Then came postwar memoirs and the publication of Austrian, German and Russian secret documents; this led such revisionists as the late Harry Elmer Barnes to suggest that the war was largely the fault of Poincaré and the Russian military. Finally, serious historians got to work. While they differed among themselves in distributing the blame, a succession of professional studies—culminating in Albertini's definitive three-volume history published in the 1940s—suggested that both the wartime and revisionist theories were at fault. None of the statesmen involved had wanted a general war; there were divided counsels in each government; and there was a large amount of miscalculation and at least as much incompetence as criminal intent all round.

CASE TWO: On December 8, 1941, most Americans were fairly clear that Hirohito had attacked a peaceful America out of the blue. After the war smoldering hostility toward President Roosevelt exploded in a burst of revisionist commentary, which suggested that he had tempted and provoked Japan into firing the first shot. The U.S. Government, in a burst of candor, gave two eminent scholars—William Langer and Everett Gleason—the run of its archives and invited them to form and write their own view. Phase III, which began with their two-volume work in the early 1950s, has been reflected in a succession of scholarly studies ever since. These studies have reached varying conclusions, but no one who reads all of them is likely to return to the simplistic theories of the 1940s: The failures of last-minute U.S. and Japanese efforts to avert war are, as John Toland points out in his recent work, too tragic and complicated a business to be explained by seeking out heroes and villains.

On Vietnam, we are now in Phase II. Secret documents have been revealed; wartime leaders are being discredited. But the revealed documents are inevitably a partial record: They do not include White House files; and they do not indicate either the context in which, or the tactical purposes for which, the memoranda they cite were written. They cannot fully reflect the doubts and torments of officials reaching for decision—which are, by the very nature of the government's operations, rarely committed to paper. The authors who analyzed these papers were not able to conduct interviews with the participants; as indicated in these volumes' preface, they sometimes lacked the research experience required to assess evidence which was necessarily, as a Washington Post editorial has pointed out, neither complete nor balanced. These are some of the reasons why such men as George Ball and Averell Harriman have warned against trying to draw sweeping conclusions from these documents.

One remedy was suggested by three noted historians before the current storm broke.

In 1969 Professor Ernest May of Harvard proposed that all classified government records, except for those few whose disclosures would directly, surely, and powerfully prejudice national security, be opened after a fixed period to qualified professional historians. Professor James McGranahan Burns of Williams followed with a similar, if more general, proposal and suggested that the waiting period be fixed at eight years. In light of recent events, this period might well be shortened. The proposal was promptly endorsed by Professor Langer, who pointed out that "systematic declassification is patently impossible: the records are so voluminous that it would take large teams of highly qualified personnel years to complete the assignment."

Professor May had in mind that a group of these historians, based in universities would then launch a major effort to produce scholarly histories of U.S. postwar foreign policy—perhaps under a foundation grant, which might be managed by an appropriate professional association or by a group of these associations. Outlining the advantages of such a historical program in persuasive terms, Professor May concluded: "Policy-makers and their staffs would possess more reliable knowledge about events which they use as trend gauges and action indicators . . . Legislators, journalists, and others commenting on current actions would have less excuse for basing comparisons on legend rather than reality . . . and students would leave the classroom with somewhat more awareness than now seems common that the world is a complicated place and that the color of truth is often gray."

At the time these professors' proposals were made, they attracted scant attention. In light of current events, they warrant serious exploration. The President might appoint a mixed commission of eminent American historians and government officials to study the matter and report back to him with specific recommendations. This would be a different operation from the inter-agency study on declassification which is already underway in the U.S. Government.

In the meantime, private studies can make a modest contribution in pointing the way. Leslie Gelb, who coordinated the compilation of Pentagon documents, is embarked on a three-year analytical history for the Brookings Institution of how five successive U.S. administrations perceived and acted on U.S. interests in Indochina from 1940 to 1965. His object is not to figure out who struck whom and why, but to show the inter-relation between official decisions and the international and domestic environment in which they were taken. His research is based on public sources; the first published results, published recently in Foreign Policy and the "Outlook" section of The Washington Post, suggest that his conclusion will be both more balanced and perceptive than those now being widely drawn from the Pentagon documents often by people who haven't even read them, but have heard of them at second or third hand.

Whatever may be the verdict of history in Vietnam, one thing is sure: It will differ from many of the verdicts now being pronounced with such speed and enthusiasm on the basis of a scattered and incomplete returns.

CHANGE FOR THE BETTER IN SELECTION OF DELEGATES: WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING

Mr. CHURCH. Mr. President, on June 25, I directed several criticisms at the method by which the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare wished to select State delegates to the forthcoming White House Conference on Aging.

It seemed peculiar to me that the Sec-